

Prosecution Attacks Key Ellsberg Witness

LOS ANGELES, March 23 (UPI)—The prosecution sought to show at the Pentagon Papers trial today that key defense witness Morton Halperin violated security regulations by taking away classified documents when he left the government service.

Halperin denied the allegation and said he had only done what was common practice.

Halperin, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense, had testified previously that he supervised compilation of the Pentagon Papers and that they would have been worthless in the hands of a foreign power for intelligence purposes.

Under cross examination by U.S. Attorney David Nissen, Halperin said that when he left the Defense Department in September, 1969, he took with him what he considered to be his "personal papers" and that they included some documents marked "top secret."

Halperin said it was usual for government officials leaving office at the end of an administration to take with them papers on which they had worked. He said a number of his associates in the Defense Department agreed that it was proper.

Halperin acknowledged that his office in the Defense Department originally turned down a request for Ellsberg to be given access to the Pentagon Papers.

The request was made on Ellsberg's behalf by Henry Rowen, president of the Rand Corp., where Ellsberg was working on a study called "Lessons of the Vietnam War."

Halperin said he told Rowen they were trying to limit distribution of the papers to as few people as possible. He acknowledged that he felt that Ellsberg might possibly make parts of it public and that was one reason the request was denied.

Rowen insisted that Ellsberg needed the papers, that his study was a Defense Department project and that he had "top secret" clearance. Halperin said that his office then reversed itself and approved Ellsberg's access.